Joe Benitez's
Chen · Benitez · Montiel · Steigerwald · Sotelo · Garcia
Lady Mechanika™
La Dama de la Muerte

To all our
loved ones who
have passed...

Until we meet again...

LADY MECHANIKA™
La Dama de la Muerte

Digital Inks by:
Studio J-13

Additional colors by:
Sabine Rich

Cover Illustration by:
Joe Benitez & Peter Steigerwald

Art Director & Story Editor:
Joe Benitez

Supervising Editor:
Marcia Chen

Production:
Michael Heisler
Marcia Chen

Book Design:
Mark Roslan
Peter Steigerwald

Lady Mechanika Logo by:
Peter Steigerwald

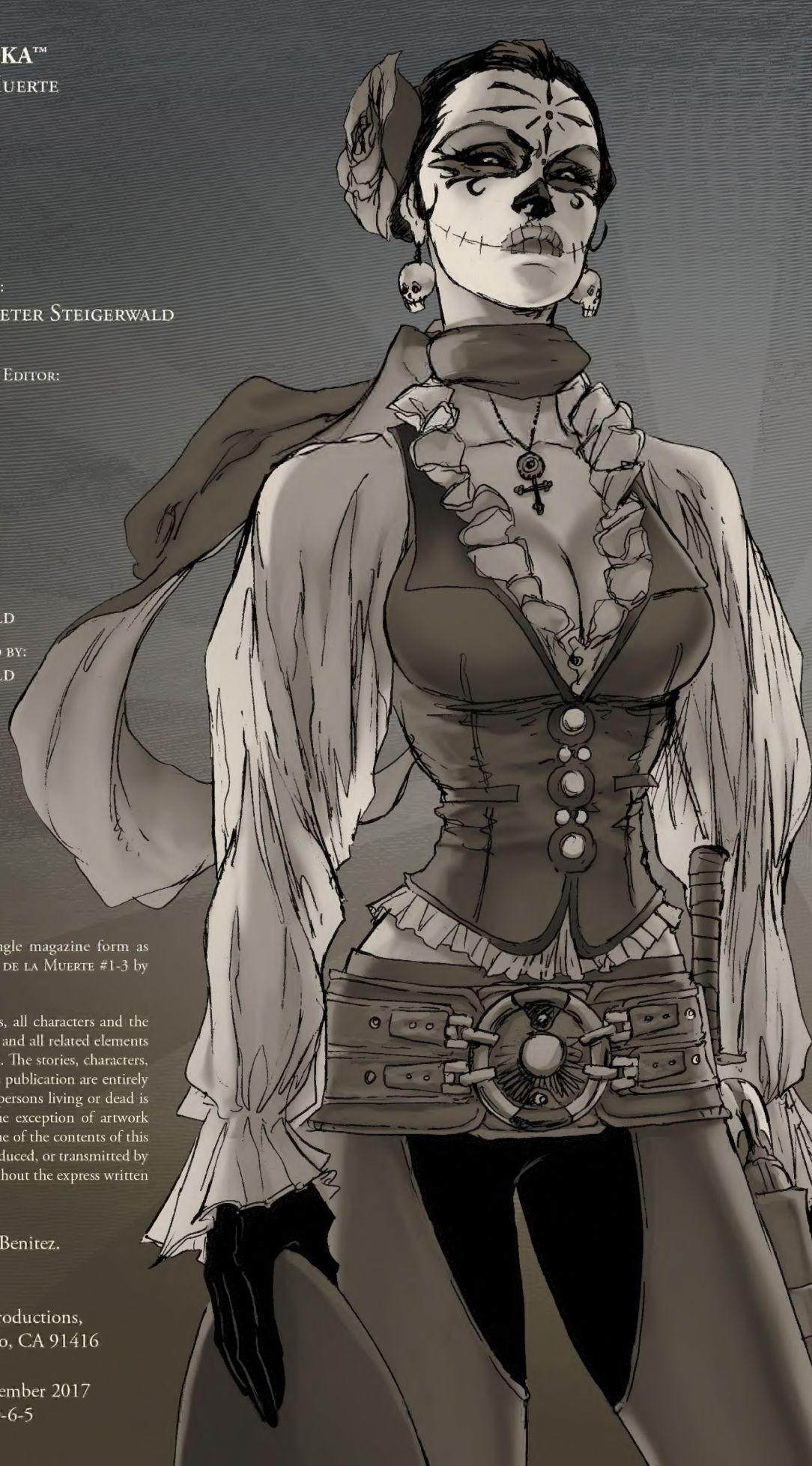
Originally published in single magazine form as Lady Mechanika: La Dama de la Muerte #1-3 by Benitez Productions.

Lady Mechanika™, its logos, all characters and the distinctive likenesses thereof, and all related elements are trademarks of Joe Benitez. The stories, characters, and incidents featured in this publication are entirely fictional. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted, reproduced, or transmitted by any means or in any form without the express written consent of Joe Benitez.

Copyright © 2017 Joe Benitez.
All Rights Reserved.

Published by Benitez Productions,
P.O. Box 16101, Encino, CA 91416

DIGITAL COPY, September 2017
ISBN: 978-0-9966030-6-5



Story
by JOE BENITEZ
and M.M. H.H. CHEN

Pencils
by JOE BENITEZ
and MARTIN MONTIEL

Colors
by PETER STEIGERWALD
BETH SOTELO
and MIKE GARCIA

Letters
by MICHAEL HEISLER

Joe Benitez's Lady Mechanika in

La Dama de la Muerte

Lady Mechanika created by Joe Benitez

Act I: *Los Inocentes*

Cover Art by Joe Benitez & Sabine Rich

There is a legend whispered among the rural peoples of Mexico.
A legend about a great and fearsome deity.
Mictecacihuatl, the Aztecs called her. Queen of the Underworld.
The lady of the dead.
But she existed long before the Aztecs came, and will continue on long after they have gone.

Many temples they built in her honor.
To this day, people trek to their ruins, crumbling and overgrown, in search of benediction.
Leaving offerings in hopes that she will answer their prayers.
Prayers for health, love, prosperity.
Or...for vengeance.

But supplicants beware.
For every blessing that is granted...
...there is always a price that must be paid.
And the goddess of death demands nothing less than...

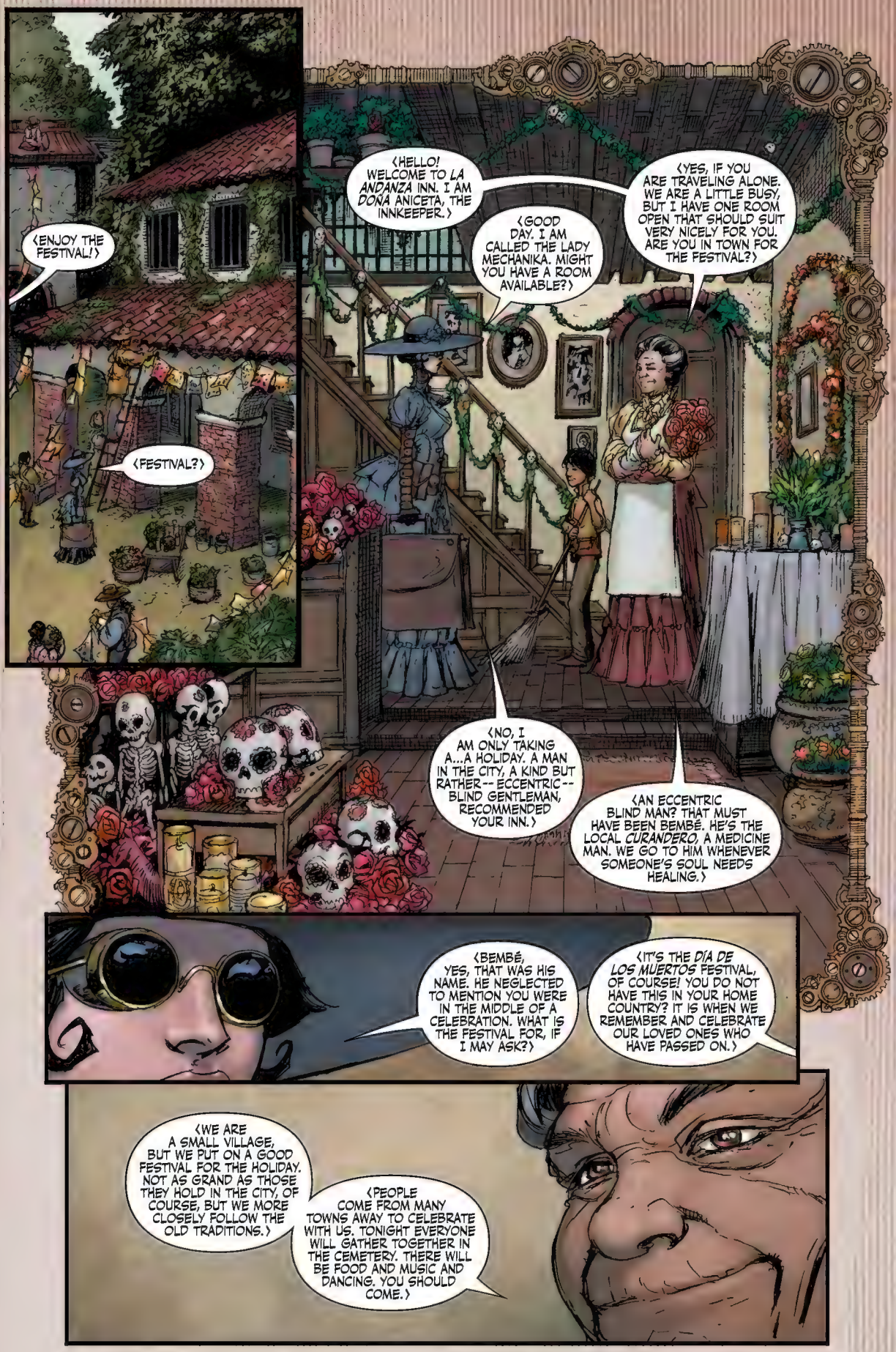
YOUR ETERNAL SOUL...

NOVEMBER 2, 1869.
CIUDAD DE MÉXICO.
CHUGGA CHUGGA CHUGGA
"(LAST STOP, MEXICO CITY.)*!"
HISSSSSSHHH CHUGG CHUGG
*TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH.
HERE YOU ARE, SEÑORITA.
YOU WISH FOR ME TO HIRE A COACH FOR YOU?
OR PERHAPS A MUCHACHO TO HELP CARRY YOUR VELIZES TO YOUR HOTEL?
NO.
MUCHAS GRACIAS, SEÑOR, THANK YOU...

〈...BUT I CAN HANDLE MY LUGGAGE MYSELF.〉

〈STOP!〉
〈THIEF! THIEF!〉
7
OOOMPH!
〈THIEF!〉
〈DON'T WORRY, SEÑOR. I HAVE YOUR ROSARY.〉
〈OH, THANK YOU, THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH, MIJITA. YOU ARE...〉
〈IT IS MOST STRANGE, SEÑORITA. I CANNOT SEE YOU.〉
〈I'M RIGHT HERE, SEÑOR. AND YOUR ROSARY, IT IS HERE.〉
〈NO, NO. I CANNOT SEE YOU.〉
〈I CANNOT SEE WITH MY EYES. I SEE WITH MY SOUL. BUT YOU...〉
〈AH, THERE YOU ARE. I SEE YOU NOW.〉
〈YOU ARE A GREAT LADY.〉
〈BUT YOU HAVE A GREAT SADNESS.〉
〈IT IS GOOD YOU HAVE COME. YOU WILL FIND WHAT YOU SEEK HERE.〉
〈BUT I AM NOT SEEKING ANYTHING, SEÑOR. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW MY TRAIN'S DESTINATION WHEN I BOARDED. I SIMPLY NEEDED TO...TO GET AWAY.〉
〈AH, MIJITA. THE MIND IS NOT ALWAYS GIVEN TO KNOW THAT WHICH THE SOUL SEEKS.〉

"¿THERE IS A TOWN, A SMALL VILLAGE CALLED SANTA CATRINA. IT IS NOT FAR. YOU ARE TO GO THERE.¿"
"¿PARDON?¿"
"¿LISTEN TO BEMBÉ, *MIJITA*. GO TO SANTA CATRINA. THEY HAVE A SMALL INN. VERY NICE, QUIET, GOOD PEOPLE.¿"
SANTA CATRINA...
"¿YOU WILL ATTAIN PEACE THERE.¿"
BIENVENIDOS
SANTA CATRINA
"¿MAY THE LADY BLESS AND WATCH OVER YOU!¿"
BUENOS DÍAS, SEÑORITA!
¿WELCOME! WELCOME TO SANTA CATRINA!¿
HOLA! BIENVENIDA!
¿THE INN IS STRAIGHT AHEAD. LET ME HELP YOU WITH YOUR BAGS.¿
¿NO, NO. THANK YOU, SIR, BUT I CAN MANAGE.¿
¿OF COURSE, *SEÑORITA*. HAVE A GREAT DAY!¿


〈ENJOY THE FESTIVAL!〉
〈FESTIVAL?〉
〈HELLO! WELCOME TO *LA ANDANZA* INN. I AM *DOÑA* ANICETA, THE INNKEEPER.〉
〈GOOD DAY. I AM CALLED THE LADY MECHANIKA. MIGHT YOU HAVE A ROOM AVAILABLE?〉
〈YES, IF YOU ARE TRAVELING ALONE. WE ARE A LITTLE BUSY, BUT I HAVE ONE ROOM OPEN THAT SHOULD SUIT VERY NICELY FOR YOU. ARE YOU IN TOWN FOR THE FESTIVAL?〉
〈NO, I AM ONLY TAKING A...A HOLIDAY. A MAN IN THE CITY, A KIND BUT RATHER-- ECCENTRIC-- BLIND GENTLEMAN, RECOMMENDED YOUR INN.〉
〈AN ECCENTRIC BLIND MAN? THAT MUST HAVE BEEN BEMBÉ. HE'S THE LOCAL *CURANDERO*, A MEDICINE MAN. WE GO TO HIM WHENEVER SOMEONE'S SOUL NEEDS HEALING.〉
〈BEMBÉ, YES, THAT WAS HIS NAME. HE NEGLECTED TO MENTION YOU WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF A CELEBRATION. WHAT IS THE FESTIVAL FOR, IF I MAY ASK?〉
〈IT'S THE *DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS* FESTIVAL, OF COURSE! YOU DO NOT HAVE THIS IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY? IT IS WHEN WE REMEMBER AND CELEBRATE OUR LOVED ONES WHO HAVE PASSED ON.〉
〈WE ARE A SMALL VILLAGE, BUT WE PUT ON A GOOD FESTIVAL FOR THE HOLIDAY. NOT AS GRAND AS THOSE THEY HOLD IN THE CITY, OF COURSE, BUT WE MORE CLOSELY FOLLOW THE OLD TRADITIONS.〉
〈PEOPLE COME FROM MANY TOWNS AWAY TO CELEBRATE WITH US. TONIGHT EVERYONE WILL GATHER TOGETHER IN THE CEMETERY. THERE WILL BE FOOD AND MUSIC AND DANCING. YOU SHOULD COME.〉

〈I APPRECIATE THE INVITATION, BUT I'M AFRAID I MUST DECLINE. I AM NOT MUCH FOR CELEBRATING AT THE MOMENT.〉
〈AH. YOU HAVE SUFFERED SOME TRAGEDY RECENTLY? A DEATH IN THE FAMILY?〉
〈I...YES...〉
〈I AM SO SORRY, MIJA. COME TO THE FESTIVAL TONIGHT. WE WILL LIGHT A CANDLE FOR YOUR LOVED ONES. PERHAPS THIS IS WHY BEMBÉ SENT YOU TO US. HE IS VERY WISE.〉
〈PERHAPS. BUT FOR NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I WOULD REALLY LIKE TO JUST REST. I'VE HAD A RATHER LONG JOURNEY.〉
〈OF COURSE. THIS IS MY GRANDSON, LUCITO. HE WILL SHOW YOU TO YOUR ROOM.〉
〈THIS WAY, SEÑORA.〉
〈THANK YOU, LUCITO.〉
〈IS IT JUST YOU AND YOUR GRANDMOTHER RUNNING THIS ENTIRE ESTABLISHMENT?〉
〈YES, AND MY LITTLE SISTER, ZARITA. BUT SHE DOESN'T REALLY HELP MUCH. SHE'S ONLY THREE.〉
〈THIS IS YOUR ROOM. LET ME GO INSIDE FIRST AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS READY FOR YOU.〉
〈OF COURSE, THANK YOU.〉

〈PRETTY!〉
〈OH?〉
〈UM, THANK YOU. YOU MUST BE ZARITA.〉
〈YAH, I'M ZITA! WHO ARE YOU?〉
〈I AM CALLED MECHANIKA.〉
〈MEEE... NEEEEEEE... KA...〉
〈CLOSE ENOUGH.〉
〈ANGELS COME TO FIESTA TODAY! PARTY! MI-NIKA, YOU COME, SEE THE ANGELS?〉
〈I...UH...I DON'T...〉
〈MY MAMA IS AN ANGEL! YOUR MAMA IS AN ANGEL TOO?〉
〈MY MAMA? I...I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE A MAMA.〉
〈NO MAMA?〉
〈OH...〉
〈THIS IS NEENA.〉
〈SHE'S...UH... LOVELY.〉
〈SHE MY BEST FRIEND.〉
〈YOU HAVE NO MAMA, NO ANGEL AT PARTY.〉
〈NEENA HELP.〉
〈HERE, YOU BORROW.〉
〈THANK YOU, ZARITA. THAT IS VERY GENEROUS OF YOU, BUT I THINK NEENA WOULD MUCH RATHER STAY WITH YOU.〉
〈YEAH...〉
〈YOUR ROOM IS READY, SEÑORA.〉
〈COME, ZITA! WE MUST GET READY FOR THE FIESTA!〉
〈BYE NIKA!〉

SIGH
YOU WERE RIGHT.
I SHOULD HAVE LEFT.
I SHOULD HAVE LEFT BLOODY SOONER.
HAD I ONLY LEFT WHEN YOU WANTED ME TO...
YOU WOULD STILL BE ALIVE.
GLUG GLUG
I'M SO SORRY.
I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO YOU...
DALLAS...

NO.
NO, NO...
NOOOOOO!
WHAT... WHAT... WHAT HAVE I DONE?
I AM A MONSTER, JUST LIKE EVERYONE SAYS!
YOU ARE NOT A MONSTER! IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
WINTER THOUGH...THERE'S SOMETHING NOT RIGHT WITH HER.*
MORE ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN IF YOU STAY WITH WINTER AND HER GANG.
KATHERINE RESCUED ME WHEN I WAS NOTHING. I CAN'T LEAVE HER. SHE'S ALL I HAVE.
NO... SHE'S NOT.
BOOM!
*SEE LADY MECHANIKA VOL 1: THE MYSTERY OF THE MECHANICAL CORPSE FOR MORE ABOUT KATHERINE DE WINTER.

BOOM
BOOM
CLICK
WHAT THE BLOODY HELL...
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
<WHAT'S HAPPENING?>

〈SEÑORITA! THE FESTIVITIES ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN! I'M SORRY IF THE FIREWORKS WOKE YOU.〉
〈NIKA! TIME FOR... FIESTA!〉
〈YOUR FACES...WHY IS EVERYONE DRESSED LIKE THAT?〉
〈OH, WE ALWAYS DRESS UP FOR DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS!〉
〈YOU DON'T THINK THE SKULLS ARE A TAD GRUESOME, PARTICULARLY FOR THE CHILDREN?〉
〈DEATH IS NOT SOMETHING WE NEED FEAR, MIJA. IT IS A NATURAL PART OF OUR EXISTENCE.〉
〈THE SKULLS REMIND US THAT WE ALL BELONG TO DEATH, IN THE END. OUR TIME HERE IS BUT A HOLIDAY.〉
〈ONE DAY, WHEN THE LADY WILLS IT, WE WILL ALL RETURN TO THE BEGINNING, TO THIS PLACE WE CALL DEATH, WHERE WE WILL REJOIN OUR LOVED ONES.〉
〈THERE YOU GO, ZITA! YOU ARE ALL DONE!〉
〈ALL DONE!〉

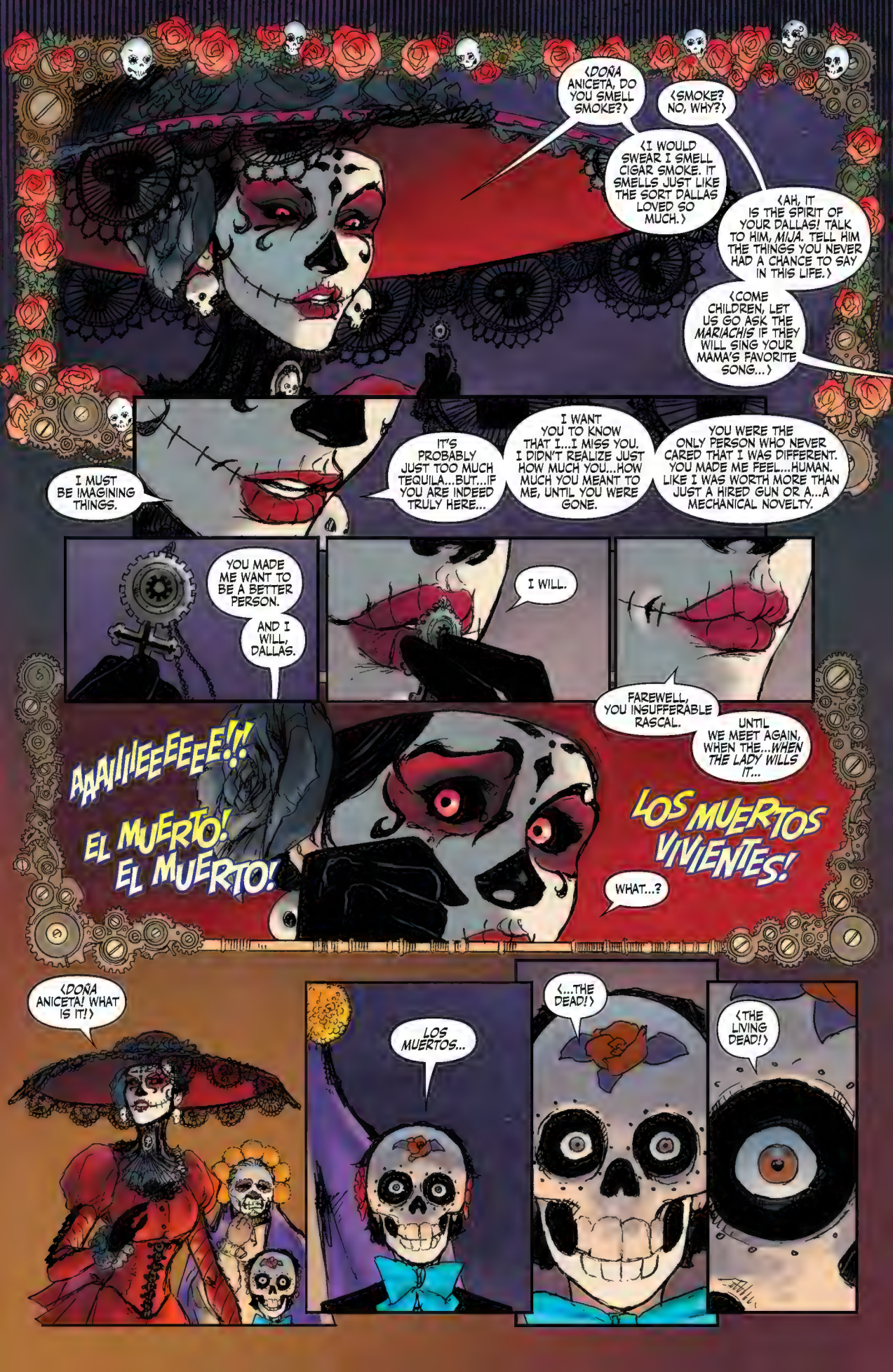
〈NIKA, YOUR TURN!〉
〈WHAT--〉
〈NIKA, COME!〉
〈YOUR TURN! YOU, SIT!〉
〈OH, NO, I'M NOT--〉
〈SIT!!!〉
〈OH! WELL, I GATHER I HAVE NO SAY IN THE MATTER.〉
〈ABA! PAINT!〉
〈HEHE... OH MY LITTLE ZITA...I'M AFRAID SHE CAN BE VERY DETERMINED. DO YOU MIND?〉
〈I SUPPOSE THERE IS NO HARM IN IT.〉
〈LET ME REMOVE YOUR GLASSES.〉
〈NO, NO....I...I HAVE A...CONDITION. IT MAKES MY EYES LOOK RATHER...ODD, RED.〉
〈A DISEASE? IS IT CONTAGIOUS?〉
〈NO, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. IT ONLY AFFECTS ME, IT MAKES ME... DIFFERENT.〉
〈LIKE AN ALBINO? I HAD A COUSIN LIKE THAT. RED EYES, WHITE HAIR. THE CHILDREN USED TO TEASE HIM, I REMEMBER.〉
〈DO NOT WORRY, MIJA.〉
〈WE HERE WILL ACCEPT YOU, NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK.〉
〈TELL ME ABOUT THE LOVED ONES YOU HAVE LOST. WE WILL LIGHT A CANDLE FOR THEM TONIGHT.〉
〈MY...MY FRIEND. DALLAS. HE WAS KILLED, AND IT WAS MY FAULT... IT WAS ALL MY FAULT...〉
〈FAULT? THERE IS NO FAULT IN DEATH. WHEN IT IS OUR TIME, IT IS OUR TIME. THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO TO CHANGE THE LADY'S WILL.〉
〈IT IS OKAY TO GRIEVE. BUT DO NOT LESSEN HIS LIFE BY WASTING YOURS ON BLAME THAT IS NOT YOUR DUE.〉
〈NIKA! NIKA!〉
〈WEAR THIS!〉
〈HMMM... NEED MORE. WAIT HERE!〉
〈IT IS EASIER FOR THE YOUNG, THEY DO NOT HAVE AS MUCH TO REMEMBER AND TO MISS.〉
〈AND IT IS EASIER FOR THE OLD, FOR WE KNOW WE WILL REJOIN OUR LOVED ONES BEFORE LONG.〉
〈FOR YOU, IT IS MORE DIFFICULT.〉
〈BUT TRUST ME, MIJA, YOUR HEART WILL HEAL, IN TIME.〉

SHORTLY...
〈THIS IS NOT AT ALL WHAT I EXPECTED.〉

〈NO? WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?〉
〈SOMETHING MORE SOMBER, I SUPPOSE. NOT SO...FESTIVE.〉
〈SOMBER? WE ARE NOT HERE TO BE SAD, BUT TO BE JOYFUL! THE SPIRITS WILL NOT WANT TO JOIN US IF WE ARE SAD!〉
〈JOIN US? THE... SPIRITS?〉
〈YES, OF COURSE! TONIGHT IS THE ONE NIGHT OF THE YEAR WHEN THE VEIL BETWEEN WORLDS IS LOWERED. SO WE THROW THIS PARTY IN HOPES THE SPIRITS OF OUR LOVED ONES WILL COME TO VISIT.〉
〈WE MAKE LOTS OF MUSIC AND LAUGHTER SO THEY CAN HEAR US.〉
〈AND THE LIGHT FROM THE CANDLES AND THE SCENT OF THE MARIGOLDS HELP TO GUIDE THEM THROUGH THE DARKNESS.〉
〈NIKA! NIKA! COME, SIT!〉
〈MY MAMA AND MY PAPA, HERE!〉
〈YOU MAY LAY YOUR *OFRENDAS* HERE IF YOU'D LIKE, NEXT TO THOSE FOR MY DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW.〉
〈IT IS A LONG ROAD TO TRAVEL, BUT PERHAPS YOUR FRIEND, YOUR DALLAS, WILL FIND HIS WAY TO YOU TONIGHT.〉
MARIACHIS!
LA LA LALA LALA...
〈YOUR PAPA USED TO SING WITH THE *MARIACHIS*, DO YOU REMEMBER?〉

‹PAPA? PAPA WAS A *MARIACHI*?›
‹WOW....›
‹OH, YES. HE HAD A BEAUTIFUL VOICE. IT'S WHY YOUR MAMA FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM.›
‹DO YOU REMEMBER, LUCITO?›
‹YES, HE WAS ALWAYS SINGING AROUND THE HOUSE WHILE DOING HIS CHORES. MAMA WOULD STOP WORKING, JUST TO SIT AND LISTEN.›
‹*HAHA*, I REMEMBER. AND HE WOULD COME HERE TO THE CEMETERY TOO EVERY YEAR, TO SING FOR THE DEAD WITH THE *MARIACHIS*.›
‹OLIVERIO? OH YES, HE HAD A GREAT SINGING VOICE. WHEN HE WASN'T BUSY EATING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT, *HA!*›
‹*BUENAS NOCHES, DOÑA ANICETA! FELIZ DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS*, LUCITO AND ZARITA!›
‹AND HELLO AGAIN, *SEÑORITA!* I HOPE YOU ARE ENJOYING THE HOLIDAY!›
‹WE BROUGHT SOME *PAN DE MUERTOS*, AND SOME *PAN DE LECHE* JUST FOR DON OLIVERIO.›
‹I REMEMBER HE HAD A WEAKNESS FOR THEM.›
‹THANK YOU, BARTOLO! AND REMEMBER TO LIGHT A CANDLE FOR YOUR MOTHER FOR ME, ROSALINDA! SHE WAS ONE OF MY DEAREST FRIENDS, SINCE I WAS ZARITA'S AGE.›
‹WE LEAVE FOOD AND DRINK HERE, YOU SEE, FOR OUR LOVED ONES TO REFRESH THEMSELVES AFTER THE WEARYING JOURNEY BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.›
‹AND LAY BLANKETS AND PILLOWS SO THEY CAN REST AS WE ENTERTAIN THEM WITH STORIES AND MEMORIES, TO LET THEM KNOW WE STILL LOVE THEM AND REMEMBER THEM.›
‹THIS IS ALL SO STRANGE TO ME, *DOÑA* ANICETA. THE SINGING AND DANCING AND LAUGHING...IT IS SO VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM THE MOURNING TO WHICH I AM ACCUSTOMED.›
‹DO YOU NOT MOURN THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED ON?›
‹OF COURSE WE DO. WE MOURN AND GRIEVE AND MISS OUR DEPARTED JUST AS YOU DO. BUT THESE ARE EMOTIONS WE INDULGE IN FOR OURSELVES, NOT FOR THEM.›
‹TODAY IS NOT FOR US, IT IS FOR THEM! TODAY IS *DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS!*›

〈COME, JOIN US, AND PERHAPS YOU WILL BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.〉
〈LUCITO, *MIJO*, DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE OF YOUR MAMA AND PAPA?〉
〈*DOÑA* ROSALINDA WAS RIGHT. PAPA WAS ALWAYS GETTING INTO TROUBLE FOR EATING THINGS HE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO!〉
〈DO YOU REMEMBER THAT TIME PAPA ATE THE FOOD THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FOR MY BIRTHDAY PARTY?〉
〈MAMA FOUND OUT AND YELLED AT HIM BUT HE SAID HE ONLY ATE ONE LITTLE TACO, OKAY MAYBE TWO. BUT HE HAD EATEN HALF THE FOOD!〉
〈MAMA WAS MAD! SHE THREW A TORTILLA AT HIM.〉
〈AND HE ATE IT, *HA HA!*〉
〈PAPA! PAPA EAT EVERYTHING! *HEE HEE!*〉
〈*HA HA!* AH, YES. YOUR PAPA WAS ALWAYS STEALING FOOD! BUT HE STAYED UP ALL THAT NIGHT TO COOK MORE FOOD FOR THE PARTY. AND THEN HE SANG YOUR MAMA'S FAVORITE SONG AND OF COURSE ALL WAS FORGIVEN.〉
〈OH, THANK YOU, *MIJA*. WHY DON'T YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, ABOUT YOUR DALLAS?〉
〈IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAD A WONDERFUL, LOVING FAMILY, *DOÑA* ANICETA.〉
〈OH, I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.〉
〈JUST SPEAK FROM YOUR HEART. WHAT DID HE LIKE? DID HE HAVE A FAVORITE FOOD? DID HE ENJOY MUSIC?〉
〈HE...HE WAS RATHER FOND OF CHOCOLATE. THERE WAS THIS SMALL CONFECTIONERY SHOP WE STUMBLED UPON IN SAN FRANCISCO. THEY SOLD THESE DELICIOUS LITTLE CHOCOLATE BONBONS...〉
〈I PURCHASED A BOX IN SECRET AND SURPRISED HIM WITH THEM LATER WHEN WE WERE ON THE ROAD. I THINK IT WAS PERHAPS THE HAPPIEST I'D EVER SEEN HIM.〉
〈AND HE... HE TAUGHT ME HOW TO DANCE...〉
〈BEFORE I MET HIM I HATED THE MERE MENTION OF DANCING...IT MADE ME FEEL SO AWKWARD. BUT WITH HIM...WITH HIM I FELT GRACEFUL AND BEAUTIFUL AND...AND ***NORMAL.***〉


〈DOÑA ANICETA, DO YOU SMELL SMOKE?〉
〈SMOKE? NO, WHY?〉
〈I WOULD SWEAR I SMELL CIGAR SMOKE. IT SMELLS JUST LIKE THE SORT DALLAS LOVED SO MUCH.〉
〈AH, IT IS THE SPIRIT OF YOUR DALLAS! TALK TO HIM, *MIJA*. TELL HIM THE THINGS YOU NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO SAY IN THIS LIFE.〉
〈COME CHILDREN, LET US GO ASK THE *MARIACHIS* IF THEY WILL SING YOUR MAMA'S FAVORITE SONG...〉
I MUST BE IMAGINING THINGS.
IT'S PROBABLY JUST TOO MUCH TEQUILA...BUT...IF YOU ARE INDEED TRULY HERE...
I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I...I MISS YOU. I DIDN'T REALIZE JUST HOW MUCH YOU...HOW MUCH YOU MEANT TO ME, UNTIL YOU WERE GONE.
YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON WHO NEVER CARED THAT I WAS DIFFERENT. YOU MADE ME FEEL...HUMAN. LIKE I WAS WORTH MORE THAN JUST A HIRED GUN OR A...A MECHANICAL NOVELTY.
YOU MADE ME WANT TO BE A BETTER PERSON.
AND I WILL, DALLAS.
I WILL.
FAREWELL, YOU INSUFFERABLE RASCAL.
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN, WHEN THE...*WHEN THE LADY WILLS IT*...
AAAIIIEEEEEEE!?!
EL MUERTO! EL MUERTO!
LOS MUERTOS VIVIENTES!
WHAT...?
〈DOÑA ANICETA! WHAT IS IT!〉
LOS MUERTOS...
〈...THE DEAD!〉
〈THE LIVING DEAD!〉

UNGH...
BEGINNING

Act II: *Los Difuntos*

Cover Art by Joe Benitez & Sabine Rich

AAAA

MUERTOS!
EL MUERTO VIVIENTE!
AY DIOS MIO!
<HEEEEELP...>
UNGH...
<IT'S JUST A BOY!>
<HE'S HURT, HE'S NOT A... A MUERTO VIVIENTE!>
MU... MUERTE...
<YOU'RE SAFE NOW, CHILD. YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT. EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT.>
<CAN YOU TELL US WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?>
SANTA... MUERTE...
AyUDAAAA...
<THIS BOY HAS BEEN TORTURED! TORTURED AND MUTILATED AND LEFT FOR DEAD!>
<WHO WOULD DO SUCH A VILE THING? AND WHY?>

LOS JINETES!
APÚRENSE! LOS DIEZMOS!
¿DIEZMOS? WHAT...? WHERE IS EVERYONE GOING?
ÁNDALE! ÁNDALE!
¡THE TITHING! THE BOY IS A SIGN FROM THE JINETES!
¡YOU'LL BE SAFE INSIDE THE CHURCH. GO NOW. WE'LL MEET YOU THERE! WE MUST PREPARE THE TITHES FOR THE JINETES!
¿JINETES? WHAT ARE THE JINETES? FATHER, DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING?
¡THE JINETES DEL INFIERNO, DEMON RIDERS.
¡THE RIDERS ARE AGENTS OF THE DEVIL! THEY ARE EVIL! YOU SEE WHAT THEY HAVE DONE TO THIS BOY.
¡THEY ALWAYS SEND A SIGN BEFORE COMING TO COLLECT THE TITHES.
¿TITHES? TITHES FOR WHAT? WHO ARE THESE RIDERS?
¡IT IS SAID THE JINETES WERE ONCE MEN, BUT THEY SOLD THEIR SOULS TO SANTA MUERTE, THE DEVIL'S MISTRESS, AND NOW THEY ROAM THE EARTH DOING HER BIDDING, COLLECTING THE TITHES THEY SAY ARE DUE TO HER.
¿WHAT DO YOU GIVE AS TITHES?
¡WHATEVER WE HAVE -- GOLD, LINENS, FOOD. IT IS SAID THEY ARE PARTIAL TO OBSIDIAN, AND WINE AND MEZCAL.

〈WHAT NEED WOULD DEMONS HAVE FOR FOOD OR DRINK? HAVE YOU ACTUALLY SEEN THESE JINETES? HAS ANYONE EVER TRIED TO STOP THEM?〉
〈OLIVERIO, DOÑA ANICETA'S SON-IN-LAW, HE CONFRONTED THEM WHEN THEY FIRST CAME TO THIS VILLAGE TWO YEARS AGO.〉
〈HE AND HIS WIFE WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN.〉
〈THE JINETES KILLED LUCITO AND ZARITA'S PARENTS?〉
〈YES. BECAUSE HE DARED TO STAND AGAINST THEM. WE ARE LUCKY THEY DID NOT TAKE THE CHILDREN TOO.〉
〈WHENEVER A TOWN DOES NOT GIVE ENOUGH DURING A TITHING, THEY TAKE ONE OF THEIR CHILDREN AS THE OFFERING. THIS BOY WAS PROBABLY FROM A TOWN THAT DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO GIVE.〉
〈HERE, CAN YOU TAKE HIM? SEE THAT HE GETS HELP.〉
〈YES, OF COURSE, BUT WHERE ARE YOU GOING? YOU SHOULD GET TO THE CHURCH TOO. THE JINETES COME AT MIDNIGHT!〉
〈SOMEONE HAS TO PUT A STOP TO THIS.〉
MOMENTS LATER...
〈SERENA! MARIA LUISA!〉
〈HELP ME WITH THIS CHILD! HE'S HURT!〉
〈HERE! LAY HIM ON THIS BLANKET. MARIA! GET ME SOME CLEAN WATER AND BANDAGES.〉
〈HE'S GOING TO NEED MORE HELP THAN I CAN GIVE. I'LL ASK RAFAEL TO TAKE HIM TO BEMBÉ'S AFTER THE JINETES HAVE GONE. BEMBÉ CAN SAVE HIM.〉

〈DO NOT WORRY. WE'LL BE SAFE HERE IN GOD'S HOUSE.〉
〈THEY'RE GOING TO TAKE ME.〉
〈WHAT? NO, LUCITO, NO.〉
〈WE HAVE GIVEN A GOOD TITHE. THEY WON'T TAKE ANYONE TONIGHT.〉
〈I DREAMED IT. I DREAMED THEY WOULD COME TODAY, ON *DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS*. AND HERE THEY ARE.〉
〈THEY'RE GOING TO TAKE ME.〉
〈NO, NO, *MIJO*. IT WAS JUST A DREAM. EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY. DON'T WORRY. WE ARE SAFE HERE.〉
〈FATHER GABRIEL, WHERE IS THE LADY, *LA DAMA INGLESA*?〉
〈I DO NOT KNOW. SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING TO PUT AN END TO THIS.〉
〈AN END TO WHAT? THE *JINETES*? DID YOU NOT WARN HER? THE *JINETES* ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD. WE CANNOT FIGHT THEM! NO ONE CAN FIGHT THEM!〉
〈NO.〉
〈WE *CAN* FIGHT THEM.〉
〈*I* CAN FIGHT THEM.〉

〈I WILL STOP THESE DEMON RIDERS, ONCE AND FOR ALL.〉

‹HERE, CAN ANY OF YOU SHOOT? WHAT OTHER WEAPONS DO YOU HAVE?›
‹NO, NO...WE DON'T FIGHT. WE DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE.›
‹IT'S SAFE HERE IN THE CHURCH. THIS IS SACRED GROUND. THEY WILL NOT COME INSIDE.›
‹I'M NOT WAITING FOR THEM TO COME INSIDE.›
‹PLEASE, *SEÑORITA*, DO NOT MAKE ANY TROUBLE! WE PAY THE TITHES AND THEY LEAVE US ALONE.›
‹LIKE THEY LEFT THAT LITTLE BOY ALONE?›
‹HE WASN'T FROM OUR TOWN.›
‹THEY SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THEIR PROPER TITHES.›
‹AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY DECIDE YOUR TITHES AREN'T ENOUGH? WILL YOU LET THEM TAKE *YOUR* CHILDREN?›
‹WILL YOU LET THEM TAKE LUCITO? OR ZARITA?›
‹NO MORE. THIS ENDS TONIGHT.›

MIDNIGHT.
I MUST ADMIT, THE GREEN FLAMES ARE A NICE TOUCH.
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I MIGHT ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT THEY HAD INDEED COME FROM THE LAND OF THE DEAD.
KLOPP KLOPP KLOPP
BUT I'M NOT BUYING IT.
〈GOOD EVENING, GENTLEMEN.〉

‹WE ARE THE JINETES DEL INFIERNO!›

‹WE HAVE COME FOR THE TITHING!›

‹I'M AFRAID THERE WON'T BE ANY TITHING TONIGHT.›

HWWHEEET

‹NOW...WHICH ONE OF YOU BRAVE GENTLEMEN FELT IT NECESSARY TO MUTILATE INNOCENT CHILDREN?›

‹YOU'RE JUST COMMON THIEVES AND MURDERERS. COWARDS, THE LOT OF YOU.›

THUMP

THUNK

CLICK

CLICK

BLAM!

BLAM!

UNGH!
YAH! YAH!
NEIGHHHHH
HMPH!
AAIEEEEE!!!
THUNK
DIOS MIO!
SNKT
CLICK
CLICK

BLAM!
BLAM!
UNGH!
AAARRGGHGHHH...
<RUN! RUN!>
GA-THUMP GA-THUMP
KLKT
CLICK
GA-THUMP GA-THUMP GA-THUMP
>KOFFE

COME ON, BOY. EASY NOW. I WASN'T GOING TO HIT YOU.
GRRRGL...
HUNH...
HUUUUUu...
VAYA CON DIOS.
HUH... HUNGH...
UNGH...

SMACK
UNG!
SMACK
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU'RE MESSING WITH...
YOU'RE AMERICAN.
WHAT'S IT TO YOU? YOU'RE NOT FROM HERE EITHER. WHY DO YOU GIVE A PISS WHAT HAPPENS TO THESE STUPID GULLS?
GALTERO, HE AIN'T GONNA LET SOME STUPID BITCH GET AWAY WITH THIS.
HE'S GONNA KILL YOU!
HE'S GONNA KILL YOU ALL...
IS THAT SO?
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.
THEY'RE GOOD PEOPLE. THEY DESERVE BETTER THAN TO BE TERRORIZED BY THE LIKES OF YOU AND YOUR CRAVEN FRIENDS -- ALL OF WHOM DESERTED YOU, BY THE WAY.
TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND THEM.
I'M NOT TELLING YOU JINK!

〈DAMA? YOU'RE OKAY? WE HEARD THE GUNFIRE...〉
〈EVERYTHING IS FINE, FATHER. AS I TOLD YOU, THEY WERE JUST MEN, WEARING THESE COSTUMES TO APPEAR DEMONIC.〉
〈YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THEM. THEY COULDN'T EVEN SHOOT STRAIGHT.〉
〈THE JINETES WERE JUST NORMAL MEN? YOU WERE ABLE TO STOP THEM?〉
〈HALF OF THEM ARE DOWN. I'M GOING TO GO COLLECT THE REST.〉
〈MEN? MEN KILLED MY DAUGHTER AND HER HUSBAND? MEN MUTILATED THAT POOR BOY?〉
〈WHY WOULD ANY SANE PERSON DO THIS?〉
〈TO STEAL FROM YOU. THEY USED YOUR BELIEFS AND FEARS AGAINST YOU, SO THEY COULD TAKE AND DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED WITHOUT ANY TROUBLE.〉
〈I'M ASHAMED TO ADMIT I USED TO RUN WITH A SIMILAR GANG, BUT WE NEVER KILLED ANY INNOCENTS. NOT...NOT INTENTIONALLY.〉
〈I WAS ONLY FOLLOWING THE LEADER, BUT IT WASN'T RIGHT AND I KNEW IT. I SHOULD HAVE PUT AN END TO IT EARLIER.〉
〈NOW I NEED TO ATONE FOR MY SINS. AND I'M GOING TO START BY PUTTING AN END TO THESE JINETES.〉
〈KEEP THIS ONE LOCKED UP. I'LL TAKE HIM IN TO THE AUTHORITIES WHEN I GET BACK.〉

〈YOU CAN'T FIGHT ALL OF THEM ALONE. LET THE *RURALES* HANDLE IT.〉
〈YOUR POLICE FORCES DON'T SEEM TO CARE WHAT HAPPENS OUT HERE IN THE COUNTRY. HOW LONG HAS THIS GANG BEEN TERRORIZING THE VILLAGES?〉
〈THESE MEN ARE COWARDS. THEY'RE INJURED AND ON THE RUN. I HAVE TO TRACK THEM BEFORE THEY CAN GET AWAY.〉
〈DON'T WORRY, I'VE HANDLED WORSE.〉
〈NIKA LEAVING?〉
〈YES, ZITA, BUT JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE. I'LL BE BACK. AFTER I STOP THE BAD GUYS.〉
〈NEENA HELP?〉
〈OH, THANK YOU, ZITA. BUT NO, NEENA SHOULD STAY WITH YOU.〉
〈DON'T WORRY, LUCITO. EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT.〉
〈THE *JINETES* WON'T BOTHER US ANYMORE? YOU'LL STOP THEM? YOU PROMISE?〉
〈YES, I PROMISE. YOU'LL NEVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE *JINETES* EVER AGAIN.〉
〈TAKE CARE OF YOUR SISTER AND GRANDMOTHER, LUCITO! I'LL BE BACK SOON!〉
〈MAY THE LADY BLESS AND WATCH OVER YOU...〉

A COUPLE HOURS LATER...
HOO HOO

CLICK
CLICK
WHAT'S THIS?

SO THIS IS THE SOURCE OF THE FALSE FLAMES. SOME SORT OF PHOSPHORESCENT MOSS. CLEVER.
SCUFF SCUFF
≥GASP!≤
SNAP
‹MUH... MUERTE...SANTA MUERTE...›
‹COME ON, LET'S GET YOU OUT OF HERE. QUICKLY NOW.›
‹DO YOU KNOW HOW TO GET TO THE NEAREST TOWN? TO SOMEWHERE SAFE?›
‹I KNOW WHERE WE ARE. I CAN FIND THE WAY.›
‹GOOD. GO DOWN THIS TUNNEL. IT'LL LEAD YOU OUTSIDE. HURRY! AND TRY TO BE QUIET!›

〈IT'S OKAY. THEY'RE NOT HERE.〉
〈WHAT?〉
〈THE JINETES. THEY'RE GONE.〉
〈A GROUP OF THEM CAME BACK FROM A RAID EARLIER TONIGHT. THEY WERE ALL INJURED, BLEEDING. THE MEAN ONE, THE ONE WHO LIKES TO HURT US...HE'D BEEN HIT IN THE FACE, HE COULDN'T TALK.〉
〈THEY SAID THEY WERE GOING TO GATHER THE OTHERS AND GO TEACH SOMEONE A LESSON.〉
〈THE OTHERS...〉
OH NO...
THUD
THUD
THUD
NO...

BIENVAEM
SANTA CATRINA
NO...
NO...
NO!
NOOOOOOOOO
THUMP

BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM BLAM
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK

Act III: *Los Santos*

Cover Art by Joe Benitez, Martin Montiel, & Sabine Rich

WHAT...?
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
NIKA!

NIKA! NIKA!

COME!

IT'S TIME FOR...

...FIESTA!!!

BUENAS NOCHES, SEÑORITA!

YOU ARE JUST IN TIME, *MIJA!* THE FESTIVITIES ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO DANCE, *SEÑORA?*

OH THANK YOU, LUCITO. BUT I THINK I'LL JUST WATCH. I DON'T REALLY ENJOY DANCING.

NO?

NOT EVEN...

...WITH ME?

D...DALLAS?

HELLO, SLIM. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.

I SEE YOU FINALLY WENT OUT ON YOUR OWN. I'M PROUD OF YOU.

DALLAS! BUT...BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CAME TO ME, SLIM.

BUT YOU CAN'T STAY. YOU SHOULD BE HEADIN' BACK.

WHAT? WHY? AREN'T YOU...AREN'T YOU HAPPY TO SEE ME?

IT'S NOT YOUR TIME. DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE HERE WAITIN'. BUT YOU HAVE TO GO NOW.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

IT IS NOT YOUR TIME...

>GASP<

GOOO...

HOOOOOO
HOOO

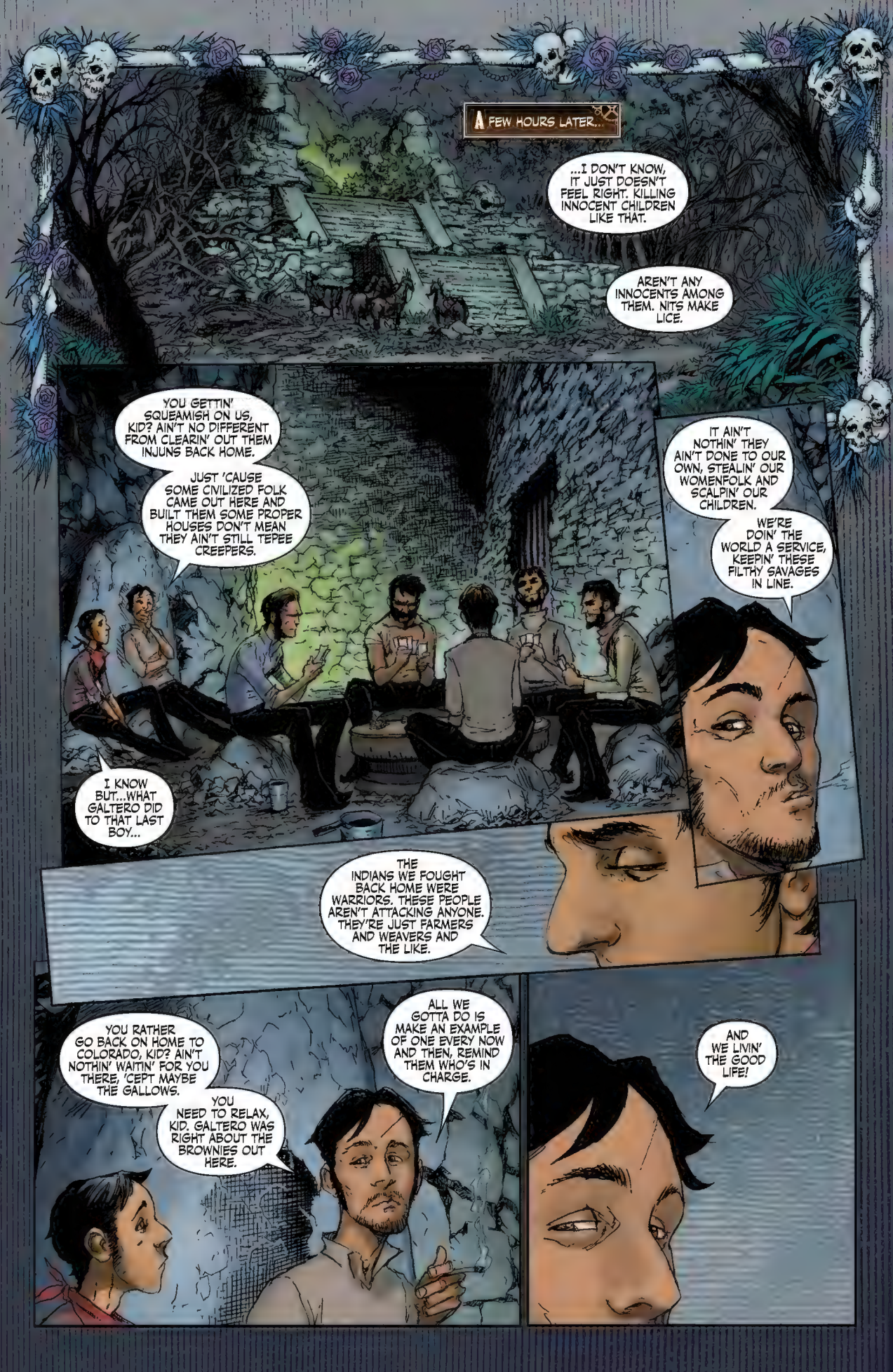
≥GASP≤
WHERE...?
HOO HOO
UNGH... WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE AM I?
‹SEÑORITA! YOU ARE FINALLY AWAKE!›*
BEMBÉ?
‹AH, YOU REMEMBER! THIS IS GOOD, VERY GOOD!›
‹I AM BEMBÉ, YES, AND THIS IS MY HOME.›

〈BUT...WHY AM I HERE? AND WHERE ARE MY CLOTHES? MY WEAPONS?〉
〈YOUR CLOTHES WERE RUINED, I'M AFRAID. AND YOUR WEAPONS...YOUR WEAPONS WERE PROBABLY TAKEN BY THE *JINETES*.〉
〈*JINETES*?〉
〈THE VILLAGE! SANTA CATRINA?〉
〈I AM SORRY, *MIJA*. SANTA CATRINA IS NO MORE. THE *JINETES* BURNED IT TO THE GROUND, AND KILLED EVERYONE IN IT.〉
〈NO...IT WAS ALL REAL, THEN. I DIDN'T JUST DREAM IT.〉
〈HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN ASLEEP?〉
〈IT HAS BEEN MANY DAYS. THE MOON HAS COME AND GONE, AND COME AGAIN.〉
〈I NEEDED ALL MY SKILLS TO STOP DEATH FROM TAKING YOU. IT TOOK THE LADY TO BRING YOU BACK.〉
〈YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME DIE.〉
〈IT WAS MY ARROGANCE AND CARELESSNESS THAT GOT THEM ALL KILLED. IF I HAD ONLY LEFT IT ALONE, LIKE THEY WANTED, THEY WOULD STILL BE ALIVE.〉

〈I'M NOT A FOLLOWER OF THE LADY. I DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HER.〉
〈ME?〉
〈THE *JINETES* ARE NOT TRUE FOLLOWERS OF THE LADY. THEY BLASPHEME HER NAME.〉
〈THEN WHY DOESN'T SHE DO SOMETHING TO STOP THEM?〉
〈SHE DID... SHE SENT YOU.〉
〈YOUR LADY IS A CRUEL MISTRESS, SENDING THESE *JINETES* TO TERRORIZE INNOCENT VILLAGERS.〉
〈PERHAPS. PERHAPS NOT. WHO IS TO SAY?〉
〈PERHAPS THEY WOULD HAVE LIVED, PERHAPS OTHERS WOULD HAVE DIED. ONLY THE LADY KNOWS THESE THINGS.〉
〈SHE HAS SENT YOU HERE TO CLEAR HER NAME. THIS I HAVE KNOWN, AS SOON AS I SAW YOUR SOUL.〉
〈YOU ARE HER CHOSEN CHAMPION.〉
〈IT DOES NOT MATTER IF YOU KNOW HER, SHE KNOWS YOU.〉
〈SHE IS *MICTECACIHUATL*, THE *SANTA MUERTE*, LADY OF THE OTHERWORLD. SHE KNOWS ALL.〉
〈I HAVE DONE NOTHING HERE BUT MAKE HORRENDOUS MISTAKES.〉
〈WHOM ARE YOU TENDING? WAS HE...WAS HE FROM CATRINA TOO?〉
〈THEY ONLY BECOME HORRENDOUS IF WE CHOOSE NOT TO LEARN FROM THEM.〉
〈EH. WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES. MISTAKES ARE A PART OF LIFE.〉

‹CATRINA? NO. YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE TO SURVIVE CATRINA.›
‹BUT THIS CHILD, HE WAS A VICTIM OF THE *JINETES* TOO. THEY FLAYED HIM, SKINNED HIM ALIVE.›
‹SKINNED HIM! THERE WAS A BOY AT CATRINA...THE *JINETES* HAD TORTURED HIM AS WELL, BEAT HIM AND CUT OFF HIS NOSE.›
‹THE *JINETES* HAVE BEEN DEMANDING TRIBUTE FROM THE VILLAGES HERE FOR MANY YEARS, BUT THEIR PUNISHMENTS HAVE BEEN GETTING WORSE.›
‹THE TITHES ARE NEVER ENOUGH NOW. THEY TAKE CHILDREN MORE AND MORE OFTEN.›
‹IT IS THE LEADER OF THE *JINETES*. HE HAS A SICKNESS, IT THIRSTS FOR BLOOD AND PAIN. THE DEATHS AND TORTURES WILL ONLY GET WORSE AS LONG AS HE LIVES.›
‹WHY DON'T THE PEOPLE FIGHT BACK? THERE ARE MORE OF THEM THAN THERE ARE *JINETES*.›
‹THEY WILL, EVENTUALLY. SOMEDAY WHEN THEY HAVE FINALLY HAD ENOUGH. WHEN THEY FIND THE COURAGE TO STAND AGAINST THEM.›
‹THE TITHING...IT IS NOT AN UNCOMMON PRACTICE HERE. EVEN THE *RURALES*, THE POLICE, ARE KNOWN TO DEMAND TAXES IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR PROTECTION.›
‹BUT THE *JINETES*, THEIR LEADER, HE GOES TOO FAR. ONE DAY THE PEOPLE WILL FINALLY HAVE ENOUGH. AND THEN MORE WILL DIE.›
‹THE PEOPLE HERE, THEY ARE FARMERS AND CRAFTSMEN. FIGHTING... THIS IS NOT A SKILL THEY HAVE. THEY ARE NOT WARRIORS, THEY HAVE NO WEAPONS SAVE THE TOOLS OF THEIR TRADES.›
‹BUT THEY WILL FIGHT. THEY MAY EVEN WIN, BUT MANY WILL DIE.›
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
‹BEMBÉ! BEMBÉ! HELP!›

〈THE JINETES...LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO HIM! THEY...〉
〈SUH...SANTA MUERTE...〉
〈WHAT? NO, NO, I AM NOT THE SANTA MUERTE. I AM JUST A WOMAN, A PATIENT OF SEÑOR BEMBÉ.〉
〈SEÑOR, WHAT IS WRONG? WHY HAVE YOU COME TO BEMBÉ?〉
〈MY SON... CAN YOU SAVE HIM?〉
〈BRING HIM HERE. LET ME SEE HIM...〉
≥GASP!≤
〈I AM SORRY, MIJO. THIS ONE IS BEYOND MY REACH. HE IS ALREADY GONE.〉
〈NO... NO...THERE MUST BE SOMETHING YOU CAN DO...PLEASE, BEMBÉ!〉
〈I AM SORRY. HE IS WITH THE LADY NOW.〉
〈THE LADY... DAMA...〉
〈YOU ARE AN AGENT OF THE LADY, I KNOW IT! YOU CAN SAVE HIM! PLEASE, ASK THE LADY NOT TO TAKE HIM! PLEASE!〉
〈I AM SO SORRY, SEÑOR. IT IS NOT IN MY POWER TO DO THIS. I CANNOT BRING HIM BACK.〉
〈BUT I CAN STOP IT FROM EVER HAPPENING AGAIN...〉


A FEW HOURS LATER...
...I DON'T KNOW, IT JUST DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT. KILLING INNOCENT CHILDREN LIKE THAT.
AREN'T ANY INNOCENTS AMONG THEM. NITS MAKE LICE.
YOU GETTIN' SQUEAMISH ON US, KID? AIN'T NO DIFFERENT FROM CLEARIN' OUT THEM INJUNS BACK HOME.
JUST 'CAUSE SOME CIVILIZED FOLK CAME OUT HERE AND BUILT THEM SOME PROPER HOUSES DON'T MEAN THEY AIN'T STILL TEPEE CREEPERS.
IT AIN'T NOTHIN' THEY AIN'T DONE TO OUR OWN, STEALIN' OUR WOMENFOLK AND SCALPIN' OUR CHILDREN.
WE'RE DOIN' THE WORLD A SERVICE, KEEPIN' THESE FILTHY SAVAGES IN LINE.
I KNOW BUT...WHAT GALTERO DID TO THAT LAST BOY...
THE INDIANS WE FOUGHT BACK HOME WERE WARRIORS. THESE PEOPLE AREN'T ATTACKING ANYONE. THEY'RE JUST FARMERS AND WEAVERS AND THE LIKE.
YOU RATHER GO BACK ON HOME TO COLORADO, KID? AIN'T NOTHIN' WAITIN' FOR YOU THERE, 'CEPT MAYBE THE GALLOWS.
YOU NEED TO RELAX, KID. GALTERO WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE BROWNIES OUT HERE.
ALL WE GOTTA DO IS MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF ONE EVERY NOW AND THEN, REMIND THEM WHO'S IN CHARGE.
AND WE LIVIN' THE GOOD LIFE!

HEY SILAS, SET THE KID STRAIGHT! HE SEEMS TO HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW THE GOOD OL' U.S. OF A. TREATS ITS LOYAL SOLDIERS. I GOTTA GO FOR A PISS.
UNGRATEFUL BASTARDS.
DISMISSED WITHOUT PAY, DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE, AND THEY WOULDA SENT GALTERO TO THE FIRING SQUAD, YOU CAN BELIEVE THAT. AND HE WAS PRACTICALLY A FREAKING NATIONAL HERO...
OH, GREAT. WHY YOU GOTTA GO AND GET SILAS ALL RILED UP AGAIN, JOHNNY! NOW WE AIN'T NEVER GONNA HEAR THE END OF IT!
AW, HE'S JUST BITTER 'CAUSE HIS WOMAN LEFT HIM OVER IT.
THEY DIDN'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH US WHEN WE WERE SAVING THEM FROM THE REBS AND THE REDS, DID THEY? DIDN'T HAVE A PROBLEM AT ALL UNTIL THEY DIDN'T NEED US ANYMORE.
THEN IT WAS SUDDENLY ALL COURT MARTIAL THIS AND MASSACRE THAT AND UNBECOMING CONDUCT BULL--
SANTA MUERTE! SANTA MUERTE! SANTA MUERTE!
OOF!
WHAT YOU GOING ON ABOUT, JOHNNY? YOU DRINK THE WORM DOWN AGAIN?
GET AWAY! GET AWAY!

SHNK
SHNK
AAAAAHHHHH!!!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU?!

SHNKT
SHNKT
SHK
SHNKT
SHNKT

THUNK
NEIGH
GA-THUMP
GA-THUMP
YAH!
YAH!
GA-THUMP
GA-THUMP

VILLA POSADA, A SMALL TOWN AN HOUR'S RIDE FROM THE RUINS OF SANTA CATRINA.
HAUL'S BETTER THAN USUAL! HA! THEY MUSTA HEARD WHAT WE DONE TO THE LAST TOWN THAT TRIED TO CHEAT US.
HEH, YEAH, THAT WAS A GOOD ONE. HOW WE GONNA OUTDO THAT?
AW, DOES THAT MEAN WE DON'T GET TO HAVE ANY FUN TONIGHT? MY KNIFE'S FEELIN' THIRSTY!
NO. NOT TODAY. HARD WORK DESERVES TO BE REWARDED.
LET'S SADDLE UP!
DON'T WORRY. ONE OF THESE TOWNS IS SURE TO DISAPPOINT SOONER RATHER THAN LATER!
¡WE ARE THE JINETES DEL INFIERNO!
¡STAND ASIDE!

〈WHAT'S WRONG WIT' YOU? YOU DEAF OR SOMETHIN'?〉
〈WE SAID...STAND ASIDE!〉

CLK
BAM
UNGH!
CLK
BAM
CLK
BAM
CLK
BAM
CLK
BAM
CLK
BAM

SKUFF
SKUFF
NO, NO... WAIT...
CK
BLAM

NEEIGH
THUD
CLK
BAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
CLK CLK
CLK
PLINK
PLINK
PLINK
CLK
BAM
CLK
BAM
CLK CLK
THAT'S SOME FANCY ARMOR YOU'VE GOT THERE.
SO THAT'S HOW YOU SURVIVED OUR LAST ENCOUNTER.
WHACK
CRACK
YEAH, I REMEMBER YOU NOW.

YOU THINK YOU'RE SO MUCH BETTER THAN US.
BUT YOU'RE JUST LIKE US.
A KILLER.
I RECOGNIZE MY OWN.
UNGH...
JUST LIKE EACH OF MY BOYS, HANDPICKED TO JOIN MY SQUAD 'CAUSE I KNEW THEY HAD THE GUTS TO DO WHAT WAS NEEDED.
WELL, ALL-- UNGH -- EXCEPT THE KID MAYBE.
BUT HE'S YOUNG, HE'LL LEARN.
UGH...
BONK

I AM NOTHING LIKE YOU.
I DON'T TERRORIZE INNOCENT VILLAGERS.
THWACK
I DON'T TORTURE CHILDREN FOR AMUSEMENT.
POW
BUT YOU GOT ONE THING RIGHT.
UNGGHH...
WHEN I NEED TO BE.
I AM A KILLER.
KRACK

SEVERAL DAYS LATER...
WHA...?
CRACK
WHO... WHO'S THERE?
SIGH

¿GASP?

PLEASE, PLEASE...
I...I NEVER WANTED TO HURT ANYBODY... I JUST WANTED TO ENLIST, LIKE MY BROTHER DID...
I WAS JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS...
THE KILLING... THE MUTILATIONS... THE CHILDREN...
I KNEW IT WAS WRONG... IT MADE ME SICK... THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO TO STOP IT...
PLEASE DON'T KILL ME...
I COULDN'T LEAVE GALTERO...HE SAVED MY LIFE...I OWED HIM...I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!

PLEASE, SANTA MUERTE! I MADE A MISTAKE! A HORRIBLE, HORRIBLE MISTAKE!
I WILL DEVOTE THE REST OF MY LIFE TO YOUR SERVICE! TO GOD, TO THE CHURCH, TO HELPING THE POOR!
I WILL SPEND THE REST OF MY DAYS ATONING FOR MY SINS. I SWEAR IT!
I SWEAR IT...
GO...
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
MISTAKES ARE ONLY HORRENDOUS IF WE CHOOSE NOT TO LEARN FROM THEM...

There is a legend told among the rural peoples of Mexico.
A legend about a great and fearsome warrior.
A champion sent from the queen of the underworld herself, to bring vengeance down upon those whose hearts are corrupt.
So miscreants beware.
Dragging their souls, kicking and screaming, down to the Lady's dark realm.
Cease your evil ways, lest tales of your misdeeds should reach the ears of the Lady.
Hoo
Beware, lest you summon forth...
...La Dama de la Muerte.
FIN

Variant Cover by Joe Benitez

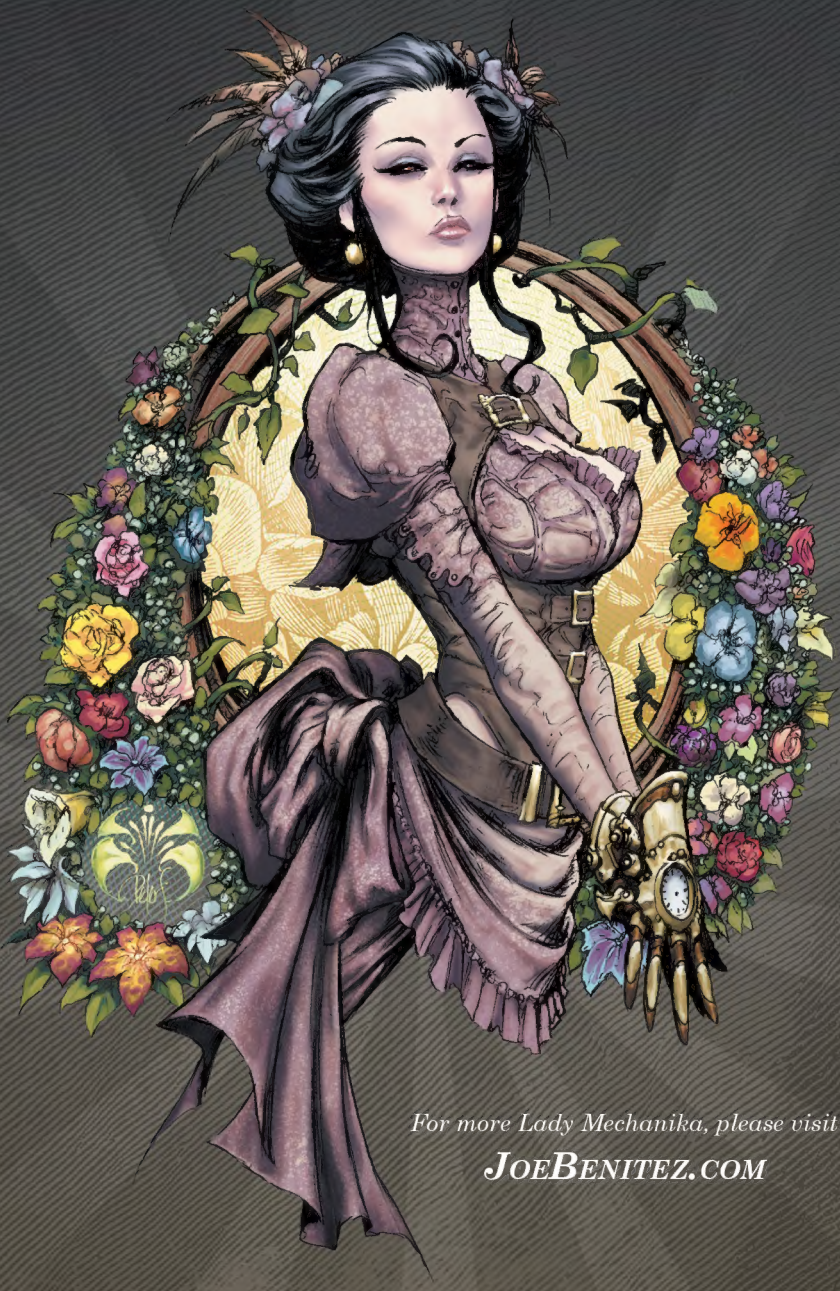
Cover Art by Joe Benitez & Peter Steigerwald

Cover Art by Joe Benitez & Peter Steigerwald

Variant Cover by Peter Steigerwald

Variant Cover by Joe Benitez & Sabine Rich

Variant Cover by Joe Benitez & Sabine Rich



For more Lady Mechanika, please visit

JoeBenitez.com

Lady Mechanika Books

Lady Mechanika *(The Mystery of the Mechanical Corpse)*
The Tablet of Destinies
The Lost Boys of West Abbey
La Dama de la Muerte
The Clockwork Assassin *(Collected Edition Coming 2018)*

Lady Mechanika: Steampunk Coloring Book I
Lady Mechanika: Steampunk Coloring Book II

BENITEZ PRODUCTIONS

Joe Benitez's Lady Mechanika™

A dark tale from the Lady's haunted past...

After suffering a tragic loss, Lady Mechanika finds solace in a remote Mexican village where the locals share with her their *Día de los Muertos* traditions. But tragedy strikes again when the festivities are interrupted by the bloodthirsty *Jinetes del Infierno.* How can one mortal woman hope to stop the fabled Infernal Riders and their unholy reign of terror over the Mexican countryside? And will the fight for peace end up costing Lady Mechanika her own tortured soul?

Set in a fictionalized steampunk Victorian world, a time when magic and superstition clashed with new scientific discoveries and inventions, Lady Mechanika chronicles a young woman's search for her identity after a mad scientist's horrific experiments left her with mechanical limbs and no memory of her past.

This volume collects the complete Lady Mechanika Day of the Dead mini-series, *La Dama de la Muerte.*

BENITEZ PRODUCTIONS

www.joebenitez.com

Rated T Teen

WARNING

This story contains violent content which may not be suitable for younger readers ...or for the faint of heart.